# Sacramentals and Some Catholic Practices

by Cardinal Francis Aidan Gasquet

# Foreword

This little book has really no need of any preface. It speaks for itself as a simple explanation of the sacramentals of the Church. It is mostly the expansion of some notes for a few lectures I gave on the subject many years ago to instruct a small Catholic audience. As will be seen my facts are chiefly taken from the works of the late Dr. Rock. But as these were printed long ago and are now difficult to find I thought it well that the information they contained should appear in a popular form.

I have found by experience that a book upon sacramentals is useful in dealing with converts, and this experience is borne out by others who urged me to print these notes.

- *Cardinal Francis Aidan Gasquet*
- *Rome, Italy*
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# Introductory

Our Divine Lord not only purchased our redemption by His death on the cross; but He established on earth a Church, which was to be the pillar and groundwork of all Truth and the means by which the graces and blessings of redemption were to be received by individual souls through the sacraments He instituted for that purpose. In so establishing these sacraments, which signified the grace they produced, Our Lord did not specifically determine the matter and form - the words and actions, but left this to the Church to determine. (Council of Trent) These rites by which the sacraments are bestowed, have been ordained by the Church from the earliest times of the Faith, and these said rites and ceremonies were sometimes named sacramentals. They were not of course the sacraments proper, which were instituted by Christ Himself, but the *rites* appointed by the Church for bestowing them. But besides these rites for the administration of the sacraments, the Church has in the plenitude of her power, instituted other means for conveying grace to the soul, not indeed by virtue of the rite itself, but chiefly by reason of the good disposition of the recipient. These means of grace, in order to distinguish them from the sacraments proper instituted by Our Lord, are named sacramentals, and the use of this word is now practically restricted to them. The number of the sacramentals is indeterminate and depends upon the Church, which has from the earliest times exercised the power of attaching spiritual favours to certain material objects in such a way that spiritual graces can be obtained by those who use them properly. It must be noticed at the outset that the forms used in the sacramentals are always *deprecatory*, that is, they beg God to bestow this or that grace or favour upon those who would make use of them worthily and with the right dispositions.

To understand the question fully it is useful to have some clear notions about Catholic teaching in regard to benedictions or blessings, Benediction is the favour or grace, which descends from God on creatures through the prayer of one having power from the Church to confer it. And this may be considered the germ or *rationale* of all Christian blessings.

# Holy Water

The first and in many ways the most important of the sacramentals instituted by the Church, in order to fortify the souls of the faithful by increasing in them the supernatural grace, which is the life of the Christian soul, is what is known as holy water. It may be considered the first of the sacramentals, because blessed water is used in many, if not in most, of the benedictions given by the Church. The water in the first instance signifies and suggests a cleansing of the person who makes use of it, and, if it be made use of by one prepared by grace, it really makes the soul spiritually stronger and more fitted to receive an increase of supernatural grace, and thus effects a closer union of the soul with God, which is the end of religion.

Throughout the Old Testament, the ritual use of water to signify cleansing is to be found on every occasion where the purity of one approaching to God's service is required. As for instance, the Psalmist says: "Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop and I shall be cleansed: Thou shalt wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow." (Psalm 50:9)

In religion the simplest elements are made use of and exalted by the prayers of the Church, For example bread is chosen as the matter of the Holy Eucharist to signify that it is the food and supernatural life of our souls; as bread is the life of our material bodies, so water is the matter of the first sacrament to signify the cleansing of the soul from the stain of sin, as water purifies our bodies from impurities - man is "born again of water and the Holy Spirit" (John 3:5). Under the Old Dispensation it was ordered: They "shall pour living waters

upon them into a vessel. And a man that is clean shall dip hyssop in them, and shall sprinkle therewith all the tent, and all the furniture, and the men that are defiled." (Numbers 19:17) Also: "Let them be sprinkled with the water of purification " (Numbers 8:7); and the Psalmist prays, "Wash me yet more from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Psalm 50:4). And this prayer we make our own, when we sprinkle ourselves, or are sprinkled with, water which has been consecrated by the Church's solemn blessing. The efficacy, however, depends upon ourselves and upon our dispositions, in reminding us by this act that our souls are impure in God's sight, and need His pardon, and that we come to His House and service in all true humility.

The introduction of blessed water by the Church can be traced back to very early times. In the Catacombs in Rome there can still be seen low columns supporting shallow marble vases for holding holy water, which was mixed - with salt and consecrated to God by special prayers, as in the present day. The *Liber Pontificalis* says that Pope Alexander I, the sixth pontiff in succession to Saint Peter, issued a decree in the year A.D. 109 permitting the faithful to have the hallowed water in their houses (*Liber Pontificalis ii. 78*). Thus in the very earliest times we find blessed water in existence, and what the Pope did in this decree was only to extend its use to the homes of the faithful. (The *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. T. Duchesne, p. 127, refers to the blessing in the "Gelesian Sacramentary." Duchesne then says that the *Apostolic Constitutions*, viii. 29 (about A.D. 375), describe an analogous rite in use in the Greek Church. He says that the *Liber Pontificalis* is the most ancient witness to the use of holy water outside of baptism, in the West.)

A painting in the Catacomb of Saint Agnese, in Rome, shows the practice of asperging the faithful exactly as it is used in the Church today.

In pre-Reformation days in England, it was the custom, before the principal Mass on each Sunday, for the priest to bless the water in the midst of the people, that they might learn from the prayers used to appreciate the value of this sacramental of the holy water, and to use it according to the intention of the Church in instituting it. (Dr Rock, *Hierurgia*, 264 seqq.) It is worth while studying the form of

blessing, to understand the meaning and purpose of the asperges or ritual sprinkling and of the use of holy water in our private lives.

Turning first towards the salt about to be mixed with the water, the priest says:

"I exorcise thee, thou creature of salt, by the living God, by the Holy God, by the God Who ordered thee, by His Prophet Eliseus, to be cast into the water to heal it (2 Kings 2:20): that thou become exorcised salt for the health of believers; that health of soul and body may come to such as use thee, and that adjured by Him, Who shall come to judge the living and the dead and the world by fire, every deceit and wickedness or design of the devil may be put to flight and depart from the place where thou shalt be sprinkled.

"O omnipotent and eternal God, we humbly implore Thy mercy, that Thou in Thy loving kindness wouldst be pleased to bless and sanctify this creature of salt, which Thou hast given for the use of mankind, that it may bring health of mind and body to all who use it, and that whatsoever may be touched by it may be freed from all uncleanness and from all assaults of wicked spirits, through Christ Our Lord."

The priest then turns to the water, saying: "I exorcise thee, O creature of water, in the name of God the Father Almighty, and in the name of His Son Our Lord, and in virtue of the Holy Ghost, that thou mayest become exorcised water to chase away all the power of the enemy, that thou mayest be able to cast him out and put him to flight with all his apostate angels, by the virtue of the same Jesus Christ Our Lord, Who is to come to judge the living and the dead and the world by fire. Amen.

"Let us pray.

"O God, Who for the benefit of mankind hast made use of the element of water to signify so many and so great mysteries, mercifully hear our prayers and impart the power of Thy blessing to this element prepared by manifold purifications, that this Thy creature may ‘receive the effect of Thy divine grace, for the chasing away of devils and the curing of diseases; and that whatsoever shall be sprinkled with this water in the houses and places of the faithful

may be freed from all uncleanness and delivered from all evil: Let no pestilential spirit reside therein, no infectious air remain about. Let the snares of the hidden enemy be removed, and may whatever is found to be opposed to the safety or repose of those dwelling therein be banished by the sprinkling of this water; that the welfare we seek by the invocation of Thy Holy Name may be given to us, and that we may be protected from all manner of attacks, through Our Lord Jesus Christ."

Then the priest mingles the salt with the water, saying:

"May this salt and water be mixed together in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

"The Lord be with you and with Thy Spirit.

"Let us pray.

"O God, Author of invincible power, King of an empire which cannot be overcome, and for ever powerfully triumphant: Who restrainest the forces of the adversary, Who defeatest the fury of the raging enemy: Who with Thy might conquerest his malicious wiles, we pray and beseech Thee, O Lord, with fear and humility that Thou wilt look with favourable countenance upon this creature of salt and water, and strengthen it with the dew of Thy fatherly goodness, that wheresoever it shall be sprinkled, all influence of the unclean spirit may be destroyed, and all fear of the venomous serpent be removed, through the invocation of Thy Holy Name, and that the presence of the Holy Ghost may be everywhere with us who seek Thy mercy, through Our Lord Jesus Christ," etc.

From these impressive prayers we may learn the teaching of the Church as to the power which through the fall of man, the devil and his wicked spirits, have been allowed by God's Providence to acquire over material things, which were created for the glory of God and the use of men. As Saint Paul teaches, "the creature was made subject to vanity: not willingly (Romans 8:20) - that is, not through any fault of its own, but by reason of the fall of man, for whose use and benefit the material things were made, but by whose fall they passed under the dominion of the Devil and his wicked spirits and became subject to what the Apostle calls "vanity," that is

instability tending to corruption and other defects; so that by a figure of speech he says that every creature (21) groaneth and travaileth in pain, and longs for its deliverance from the thraldom which has come upon it, when man shall be delivered from sin by Our Lord's Redemption, as "we also groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption of the sons of God, the redemption of our body" (23). In other words, material things, made by God for man passed by Adam's fall under the dominion of Satan the arch-enemy, and through the redemption effected by Our Lord the power of the enemy over them was broken and they once more became serviceable to man in their proper use.

In England, as in all other Catholic countries, in pre-Reformation days, the people had the fullest belief in the efficacy of holy water. Each Sunday the solemn blessing was given by the priest in every parish church in the midst of the people, who were then sprinkled by their pastor as a sign of the purity of conscience, which they should endeavour to cultivate when assisting at the great Sacrifice of the Mass which was to follow.

A vase for the reception of the blessed water was also placed in the porch of every church, that the people should bless themselves with it, as a symbol of the due cleansing of their minds from every stain before entering into God's house and coming into His sacred presence. Even to this day, in very many of the old village churches may still be seen the remains, more or less perfect, of the vases in which in Catholic days was kept with care the hallowed water for the use of everyone; and in several places there may still be noted the place near the cemetery cross in which there was stored the water frequently used by the faithful to sprinkle upon the graves of departed friends and relations. In some Catholic countries to the present day it is the custom to place on the graves a vessel for holy water to be used by the relations of departed Catholics when they visit and pray for those souls that have gone from them to God. I remember in Switzerland being much impressed when assisting one day at a ceremony after a parish Mass, where all present followed their priest into God's acre and joined him in prayers for the faithful departed and in sprinkling the graves of relatives and friends with the blessed water.

We find also in such an account of the old Catholic ceremonial as may be found, for example, in the *Rites of Durham* (printed by the Surtees Society), the special care taken to see that the receptacles of the holy water were kept clean; and the rite of blessing is prescribed. In the same account it is also declared that it was the custom in Catholic England, as elsewhere, for the faithful to preserve the blessed water, after their houses had been solemnly blessed with the Paschal water on Holy Saturday.

It is of interest to cite a passage in the above-named *Rites of Durham*, which gives the recollection of one who knew the pre-Reformation practice there. It runs:

"The north church door, being kept very clean and always fresh water was provided against every Sunday morning by two of the bellringers, or servitors of the church, wherein one of the monks did hallow the water very early in the morning."

The object of taking the water before entering God's house is to act as a reminder of the purity with which our souls should come into God's sacred presence. The mere act, if not done with thought and in the spirit of humility, is of no practical advantage to us, but when done in the proper spirit we make our own the graces attached by the Church to the blessed water.

From very early times it has been the custom for Catholics to keep blessed water in their houses and to make constant and reverent use of it, especially before retiring at night; a prayer was said that God would drive away all snares of the wicked spirits, and protect all dwelling therein during the hours of darkness. In most religious houses it is a pious practice, after the office of Compline, for the superior publicly to asperge the community, and for the individual rooms to be sprinkled before the night-time.

It may here be noted that the use of and reverence for holy water is insisted upon also in the Eastern rites. The public asperges is not given every Sunday as among the Westerns; but only on the first Sunday of each month, when the priest is directed to sprinkle the water on the walls of church, on the altar, and upon the people, as in our Western rites. Once a year, too, the Orientals have a much more solemn blessing of the water, on the vigil of the feast of the

Epiphany, when there is a long ceremony (This blessing was approved for the Latin Church in 1890, and the ceremony may be found in the recent *editio typica* of the *Rituale Romanum*, Appendix I.) commemorating the baptism of Our Lord in the Jordan. Some of the water then blessed is carried away by the faithful to their houses, where it is preserved, if possible, after the walls have been sprinkled, till the following feast of the Epiphany. Saint John Chrysostom, in a sermon delivered on this feast, says: "This is the day on which Christ was baptised and on which he sanctified the nature of water. Hence it is that everyone, towards midnight of the festival, provides himself with some of the water, which he conveys home and carefully preserves during the whole year, as the waters were this day sanctified."

# Sign of the Cross

Saint Paul, writing to the Corinthians, said: "The work of the cross to them indeed that perish is foolishness: but to them that are saved, that is, to us it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18)

In many passages of Holy Scripture the cross is referred to with peculiar distinction and honour. In the book of Ezechiel (9:4-6) for instance we have probably the earliest of these references. The prophet is narrating a vision vouchsafed him by God, in which he was shown the abominations perpetrated in Jerusalem, and the punishments which came upon those guilty. He saw six men standing with vials of destruction in their hands, and among them one with a horn of ink, to whom the Lord said: Pass through the city in the midst of Jerusalem, and sign with *Thau* upon the foreheads of the men who mourn over all the abominations which are done in the midst of her. Then He said to the other six: "Go ye after him through the city and strike: . . . utterly destroy old and young, maidens, children and women, but upon whomsoever you shall see *Thau*, kill him not" (verse 6).

Now this sign of protection - the *Thau* - is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and as long ago as the time of Saint Jerome it was remarked that according to the ancient form of writing it resembled perfectly a cross. In his Commentary on Ezechiel (9:4) Saint Jerome says: "In the ancient form of Hebrew letters, which still the Samaritans use [i.e. in Saint Jerome's time] the last letter of the alphabet, *Thau*, is like the cross which is marked on the foreheads of Christians, and is often attached to a signature." In the New Testament Our Lord refers to the instrument of His Passion, saying: "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth Me is not worthy of Me" (Matthew 10:38); and the Evangelist in enumerating the signs that are to precede the coming of the Day of Judgement, names the appearance of the cross in the heavens: "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. And then shall all tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty" (Matthew 24:30). The ancient Fathers, such as Saint Jerome, Saint Hilary, and Venerable Bede, etc., are unanimous in explaining that "the sign of

the Son of man" means the sign of the cross - the instrument of our redemption. Saint Paul in his Epistles makes constant mention of his devotion to the cross of Christ, and exclaims: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 6:14).

Our Lord's death of course sanctified the symbol of the cross, which from being regarded with horror as an instrument of ignominy, became, under the teaching of the Apostles, the symbol of Our Lord's triumph and victory over sin, and a sign of the faith in Our Lord. It was the mark by which the first Christians recognised their fellows. Tertullian for instance in the beginning of the third century writes: "At every step and movement, whenever we come in or go out, when we dress ourselves, or prepare to go abroad, at the bath, at the table, when lights are brought in, or lying or sitting down, what ever we are doing, we make the sign of the cross upon our foreheads" (*De Corona militis*, cap. ili). Likewise Saint Hippolytus of Rome, writing about A.D. 220, exhorts the Christian always to sign his forehead with the cross as a shield against the devil; and he likens it to the blood of the lamb, which the Israelites in Egypt sprinkled on their door-posts as a sign that the destroying angel was to pass them by. (The *Apostolic Tradition* of Saint Hippolytus, near the end.)

Saint John Chrysostom (A.D. 398-407) testifies to the use of the cross in the Greek Church, "Everywhere," he says, "is the symbol of the cross present to us. On this account we paint and sculpture it on our houses, our walls, our windows, we trace it on our brows, and we studiously imprint it on our souls and minds." Saint Jerome, too, in a letter to a friend writes of the sign of the cross: "Frequently trace the sign of the cross upon your forehead."

If done with reverence and thought the holy sign of the cross is not only a protection from the powers of darkness, but it is a reminder of the power of our Faith. "In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost" is a protestation of our belief in the Trinity and the Unity of God. In this "name" is a declaration of the Unity of God in the three Persons. The signing also is important. The touching of the forehead is to show that the Son proceeds from the Father; and that the Holy Ghost proceeds from both the Father and the Son is

signified by touching the heart and the two shoulders; whilst the form of the cross tells us of the redemption by the cross. Saint John Chrysostom writes of the cross: "As the creation of the world manifests the power of God so the cross of Christ shows us His divine power. Is there a house where the cross is not visible to the eyes, as a trophy erected against the devils, is a safeguard to souls. It is placed upon our ships to be their pilot, on the walls of our cities to be their strongest rampart. Not a King but makes it the highest ornament of his crown, not a church which does not display it as its standard."

The earliest rite was of course the signing of the forehead. The various parts of the present signing imply knowledge, love, and service; faith, hope, and love. As Saint Ambrose has it, we touch our foreheads to proclaim that we ever confess Him, our heart to declare our lasting love for Him, our shoulders to mean that we will labour and work for Him.

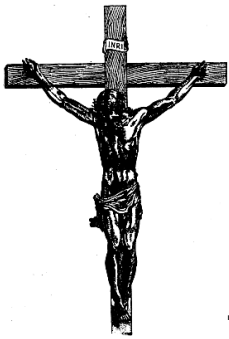
It is an act of faith, hope, and love; and by signing ourselves we dedicate our mind and heart and body to God's service. The signing of the cross is a ceremony approved and blessed by the Church from the first period of Christianity. It consists of words and actions. Neither is necessary, yet both desired by God, as He wishes worship of body and soul. In the first words - "In the name" proclaims our belief in the Unity of God. As already noted, the mention of the three Persons proclaims our faith in the Trinity: the head represents the Father, knowledge; the touching of the heart declares that the Second Person proceeds from the Father by love; that the Third Person, the Holy Ghost, proceeds from the Father and Son, is signified by the signing of the two shoulders. The cross recalls our belief in the redemption by Christ's death. The whole is not an act of faith only, but of hope and love, and by it we dedicate our minds and hearts and bodies to God's service.

There can be no doubt as to the antiquity of the use by the early Christians of the sign of the holy cross. The earliest Fathers of the Church find types of it in the old law: when Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasses he placed his hands in the form of a cross on their heads, which Tertullian explains as the earliest symbol of the cross of Christ. The sign of Christ's cross is a protection for the Christian,

Saint John in the Apocalypse says that God gave charge to the destroying angels to have regard to those whom He had signed on the forehead. To the early Christians it was the password and sign of recognition. Its use by the Church is universal. It is used not only when we enter the church but everywhere. In the Sacraments it is used habitually. Holy Mass begins and ends with the sign, and it is made 48 times during its course. We should use it before and after prayer and meals, in time of danger and temptation as the most powerful aid, and for procuring the grace and assistance of God in our needs. Every member of a noble family values and even glories in his escutcheon. His crest is frequently displayed. It is shown on marble, on silver and gold, and on precious stones. After death it is frequently hung up on the outside of the house.

The cross is the Christian's arms. The display of family arms is the pride of the family and registers the determination that no sinister blot shall be introduced into it. So to Christians should be the sign of the Cross. It was loved by those of the Faith who have gone before us. It is practised everywhere. Everyone has a natural love of his own nation, and salutes its flag. So we Catholics should love our Faith and ever be ready to salute its standard, which is and has been from the earliest times the cross of Christ. By it we Catholics share the faith, hope, and love of all other Catholics, for by it we have all been redeemed. Under its shadow we fight against the powers of darkness, and we may have confidence that by God's help we shall gain the victory. *In hoc signo vinces* is our constant hope. Beneath the cross we labour in God's work. Through it we hope to be saved, and by virtue of the price paid by Him who died upon it we confidently expect to receive the reward of our struggles here below. We should prize being enrolled under such a standard, and we should never be ashamed of making use of it. A distinguished Protestant writer declares that it is to be regarded by every Christian as "a most inoffensive ceremony and devoid of any just complaint."

# Crucifix




The Crucifix is the great object of devotion of every loyal Christian. It is the standard and the touchstone of his faith and honour. It differs from a mere cross in having upon it a representation of Our Lord crucified. It is more holy for this reason than the cross. It is always present in Catholic churches, and no Mass can be offered without a crucifix being upon the altar. The altar with the crucifix represents Calvary. It is a sacramental of the Church ever living in its results and devotion to the representation of Christ crucified, and is repaid by the graces we draw from it. It is so closely connected with the sign of the cross, that whatever can be said about the one applies to the other. However, whilst from the earliest years of Christianity it was the practice of Christians to sign themselves with the cross and to place the sacred emblem on the walls of their places of religious assembly, and upon their altars, etc.; it was not until long after the preaching of the Gospel and the spread of the Christian religion, that Christians dared to make use of any representation of Christ nailed upon the cross.

It must be remembered that in the pagan world the cross was regarded with horror and that a shade of infamy was cast upon one who had suffered death in this way. Consequently the Church, ever careful to avoid giving any scandal or putting any stumbling-block in the path of converted Gentiles, avoided the representation of Christ on the cross.

In this way, as Saint Paul says, Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Gentiles foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23). And so during the first centuries of the Faith representations

of Our Blessed Lord on the cross were avoided. At the same time, the desire to supply such an obvious need of expression was the occasion of some ingenuity on the part of the early Christians for the purpose of insinuating the kind of death which Our Saviour suffered for our sakes. The Apocalypse furnished a beautiful illustration which was not uncommon. Saint John the Baptist had pointed out Our Lord as the Lamb of God (John 1:29) and in the Apocalypse Saint John draws a striking picture of "the Lamb which was slain from the beginning of the world" (13:8). And he tells us that he saw in his vision of heaven, "in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the ancients, a Lamb standing, as it were slain. . . . And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne" (verses 6-7).

The early Christians delighted to represent Christ crucified as a Lamb bearing a cross, sometimes as lying slain or as on a throne. As time went on the Lamb began to be represented as stretched upon the ground or against a cross, and frequently as standing at the foot of a cross and shedding its blood. In the fourth century Saint Paulinus of Nola (xxii. Ep. ad Severum) describes this in a couplet, translated by Dr. Rock thus:

> Neath a red cross, see Christ Our Saviour stand,
> Veiled in the figure of a snow-white lamb,
> The lamblike victim, unoffending, immolated
> By unjust death for our offences.

At first this cross was represented, plain and without ornament, but later it was decorated with jewels, with a crown on the summit, and entirely encircled with flowers and gems. Eusebius tells us that Constantine ordered the cross to be painted in this manner, and the meaning attached to this form is expressed by Saint Paulinus:

> See how the cross of Christ a crown entwines,
> O'er God's temple it refulgent shines;
> Pledging bright guerdon for each passing pain.
> Take up the cross, if thou the crown wouldst gain.

From the time of Constantine, when he prohibited the use of a cross as a form of punishment, crosses began to be erected along the public ways and at the entrance of towns and villages and in the

public market-places. This practice, which still exists in countries which have preserved their Faith, was common in England before the Reformation. An old treatise, *Dives et Pauper* (printed in 1496), says: "For this reason ben crosses by the ways, that whan folke passynge see the crosse, they sholde thynke of Him that dyed on the crosse, and worshipp Him above all thynge."

The crucifix is the great object of love and veneration of every loyal Christian. It is or should be his standard, and since Constantine decreed that in place of the figure of the Lamb with the cross, Our Lord in His human form was to be represented as nailed to the cross, it has been set up upon every altar as representing Calvary, and without it, as mentioned above, no Mass is or can be said. It does for all of us what the Passion Play does for those who are able to see it.

The crucifix has been the book of the Saints. Saint Bonaventura, Saint Thomas, and others have looked to it as the inspiration of their writings. It is borne as the standard in every Catholic procession, and it recalls to our minds, if we look upon it reverently and with love and intelligence, the fundamental doctrine of the Incarnation. On certain days in the liturgy of the Church the crucifix is exposed for our special reverence and adoration. In England in pre-Reformation days, on Palm Sunday especially, there was practised the solemn adoration of the great crucifix in the churches, and on Good Friday in every church at this day we have the adoration of the crucifix or as it was called in England "the creeping to the cross.' Of course, no instructed Catholic ever thinks or ever thought that the adoration was to the material object. No outward act can constitute idolatry, and every act has that meaning alone which the mind intends. In Catholic days in England all were carefully instructed in the meaning of the act of adoration of the crucifix. The instructions were clear and precise. So clear and precise that no one could mistake the meaning. The book *Dives et Pauper*, for instance, could not more clearly put the Catholic doctrine on the point. Not even the most simple soul could mistake the act of reverence to the crucifix, It was to Our Blessed Lord Himself and not to the material object which represented Him. To take one instance of the crucifix which was brought to the bed of the dying Christian. The sick man was exhorted to set the crucifix

before his eyes and to say: "I know well thou art not my God, but thou art imaged after Him and makest me have more mind of Him after whom thou art imaged." '"Lord, Father of heaven, the death of Our Lord Jesus Christ Thy Son, which is here imaged, I set between Thee and my evil deeds, and the deserts of Jesus Christ I offer for what I have deserved and have not." (Mon. Rit. iii. 357)

Saint Thomas teaches us that there are two ways of looking upon the crucifix. No Christian would dream of treating with irreverence anything connected with Our Lord: the Bible, for example, and in this reverent act there is the germ of the special reverence shown to the crucifix. If we kiss it we refer the act to the person of Our Lord, as we do when we kiss the picture of a beloved mother whom God has called to Himself.

It is well always to bear in mind that idolatry cannot be the result of any external act. Acts have the meaning that is intended, and no Catholic, however simple, ever dreams of thinking that the mere external symbol of Christ hanging on the cross has any special call, except as a memorial of Him. It is His sacred Person we adore and reverence by every act of honour shown to the crucifix - we do not adore the object, but Our Blessed Lord Himself.

That this is the only meaning to be attached to our act, was taught clearly in pre-Reformation days. For instance, in the old book *Dives et Pauper*, above referred to, the Instructor starts the subject by replying to the objection raised that there were too many images. These, he Says, serve three great ends: "They are ordained to stir men's minds to meditate upon the Incarnation of Christ and upon His life and Passion; and also to move the heart to devotion and love, for oft man is stirred more by sight and by hearing than by reading: thirdly, images are intended to be a token and a book to the ignorant people, that they may read in imagery and painting as clerks read in books." *Dives* pushes his point and asks how it can be possible to read any lesson from a painting.

To this *Pauper* replies: "When thou seest the image of the crucifix, think of Him that died on the cross for thy sins and thy sake, and thank Him for His endless charity that He would suffer so much for thee. See in the image how His head was crowned with thorns till the blood burst out on every side, to destroy the great sin of pride

which is most manifested in the heads of men and women. Behold! and make an end to thy pride. See in the image how His arms were spread abroad and drawn up on the tree, till the veins and sinews cracked and how His hands were nailed to the cross and streamed with blood, to destroy the sin which Adam and Eve did with their hands, when they took the apple against God's prohibition. Also He suffered to wash away the sin of the wicked deeds and wicked works done by the hands of men and women and make an end of thy wicked works. See also how His side was opened and His heart cloven in two by the sharp spear and how it shed blood and water, to show that if He had more blood in His body, more He would have given for men's love. He shed His blood to ransom our souls, and water to wash us from our sins."

# Blessings and Consecrations

In the Old Law, the Synagogue by the ordinance of God Almighty made use of numerous consecrations and benedictions. They were figures and shadows of the Christian blessings to be used for the good of all nations, and above all, types of the inheritance of the Gospel in continuance of the work of Christ Who blessed things and persons and ordered His disciples to do the same.

The Church, depository of the grace and salvation of Christ, was charged to dispense these graces and blessings for the benefit of mankind.

Thus, besides the Holy Sacrifice and the sacraments proper, established with their majestic and appropriate ceremonies, in view of the vast domain of things created by God and put at the disposition of man, the Church established appropriate exorcisms, consecrations, and benedictions in which making use of its power of commandment, sanctification, and intercession, it attacked the influence of the enemy of mankind who ever is on the watch to snare and capture the soul of man, and by attaching spiritual blessings to things drives away the malign influences of the Devil and thus makes them helps to those who rightly use them.

These blessings must be understood as extended to those simple objects of piety such as crosses, medals, and scapulars which are used by the faithful with right intentions and piety as are indicated in the formula or the formulas of their blessing. These are not the great sacramentals formally sanctioned by the Church; but the dedication of these material aids to piety sets them apart for the worship of God and consequently gives them an entirely new character. A blessed cross, or image, or set of beads, are, as it were, charged with spiritual effects, and the evil, which is attached to them through contact with impure nature or the powers of darkness, gives place to the graces and blessings bestowed upon them by the Church's authority, which render them pleasing to the Almighty, and according to Saint Thomas (2.29.24 ad 7) apt to produce the effects they can give by virtue of the expressions, "purify," "bless," and "consecrate" and the exorcisms, the signs of the

cross, and prayers employed on the occasion of the dedication of these material things to God's service.

It should also be noted that these rites are accompanied by earnest supplications that God may be pleased to grant present and future blessings on all those who with faith and devotion make use of these blessed places and objects, as for instance in churches and at altars consecrated to His service. In like manner grace comes to those who use simple objects of piety which have been blessed - *virtutem vel gratiam benedictionis* - apart from the worth or merit of those who impart the blessing, such objects, for example, as crosses, images, scapulars, etc., which minister to the piety and devotion of the faithful, and the chief objects of which are indicated in the forms of benediction.

With all such objects there is an efficacy of supernatural power, which draws down upon those who rightly make use of them the protection of God and attracts to them His blessing and grace.

A word may be said usefully as to simple blessings which are given ordinarily to people. The blessing is in reality a powerful petition made officially by the Church to God for His grace to descend on the recipient. He has established His Church and endowed it with all possible privileges, and this Church has the right, duty, and mission to make intercession for the bestowal of the means of salvation. In this way she does not merely make intercession, but, so to say, she ordains and the effect follows infallibly on such as are in proper dispositions. In this way these blessings are similar, though in a lesser degree, to the sacraments, which effect infallibly the graces they signify.

Saint Augustine points out that frequently in the Old and New Testaments and in the works of the Fathers of the Christian Church the goods of this world are called the blessings of God (in Psalms 66 and 127), Whatever we ask for from the Almighty should serve as a means for our salvation, and all that does not help to that end is not good for us and should not be asked for from Our Saviour. A doctor knows what is good for the health of a sick man, and what is not good he keeps from him.

In all tribulations we do not quite know whether we make our

petitions for help as we should. Because the trials of life are hard to bear, we beg with our human will that they be taken from us. But our confidence in the goodness of God obliges us to hold that He does not neglect us even if we do not obtain relief, for thus "virtue is made perfect in infirmity." We should try and look upon it as a favour and grace when we do not obtain relief according as we will; knowing that God ever does what is best for us. When we ask for temporal goods, let us ask with this condition - let us ask with moderation and fear. Let God do what is best for us and refuse our prayer if it be best for ourselves, says Saint Augustine (Serm. 3540, 81). It is not wrong to ask what we want, but it is best not to regret much if we do not obtain it.

# Images

Connected with what has been said about the crucifix comes the subject of images made use of by the Church in the public places of worship and by Catholics in their private devotions. The teaching in the English pre-Reformation work of instruction *Dives et Pauper* is explicit as to the meaning and use of the images of Christ and His saints. The Instructor warns those who would learn Catholic teachings not to mistake the nature of the reverence paid to any image. He writes: "In this manner I pray thee read thy book and fall down to the ground and thank thy God who would do so much for thee. Worship *Him* above all things - not the stock, nor the stones, nor the wood, but Him who died on the tree of the cross for thy sins and thy sake. Thou shalt kneel, if thou wilt, before the image, but not *to* the image. Thou shalt do thy worship *before* the image, before the thing; offer thy prayer before the image, before the thing, but not to the thing, for it seeth thee not, heareth thee not, understandeth thee not. Make thy offering if thou wilt, before the thing, but not to the thing; make thy pilgrimage not to the thing nor for the thing, for it may not help thee, but to Him and for Him that the thing represents. For if thou do it for the thing or to the thing, thou doest idolatry." The teacher continues to enforce this lesson of the right use of what he calls the books of the unlearned: "So should the unlettered man use his book; that is, imagery and painting, not worshipping the thing but God in heaven and the saints in their degree. All the worship he doth before the thing he doth it not to the thing but to Him the thing represents."

It is of interest to see how in these clear instructions the Catholic teacher of pre-Reformation days deals with such a ceremony as the adoration of the cross. "On Good Friday," he says, "especially, in holy church, men creep to the cross and worship the cross" - was the objection raised. "This is so," replies the teacher, "but not in the way thou meanest. The cross that we creep to and worship so highly at that time, is Christ Himself, He is that cross, as all doctors say, to whom we pray and say *Ave crux spes unica* - Hail thou cross, our only hope."

But again the objection is urged: "On Palm Sunday, at the

procession, the priest draweth up the veil before the rood and falleth down to the ground with all the people, saying thrice thus, *Ave Rex noster* - Hail be Thou, our King. In this he worships the thing as King!" In answer to this the Instructor says: "God forbid! He speaks not to the thing but to Him who is represented by it." In this lies the difference between idolatry and the relative reverence paid to images by the Church. To an idol prayers are offered as to something that is capable of helping the suppliant. Before an image in a Catholic church prayers are offered to the Mother of God or to some special saint to beg their intercession at the throne of God, and the object, and the sole object, of the image is to direct the attention to the person represented, as has been set forth in the old Catholic book of instruction already cited in regard to the honour shown to the crucifix.

The practice of ornamenting the house of God with images and paintings has the authority of God Himself. Moses was ordered, as we may see in the Book of Exodus, to place two cherubims of beaten gold upon the Ark, and to set up a brazen image of the fiery Serpent, that the Israelites who had been bitten might recover by looking on the figure (Numbers 11:29). In Solomon's temple there were made two large statues of cherubim of olive-tree wood overlaid with gold, and all the walls round about were carved with figures. When David directed Solomon to realise his intention of building God's house, he gave him a full description of the porch and temple and assured him "All these things came to me written by the hand of the Lord, that I might understand all the works of the pattern" (1 Chronicles 19).

It is true, of course, that God ordered Moses in His Commandments that His Chosen People should not make any idol or graven thing, "neither shall you erect pillars, nor set up a remarkable stone in your land, to adore it" (Leviticus 26:1). It is this last clause which gives the real meaning to His law. It is the intention that is the whole matter. It is the *adoration* of these things that is forbidden- - "thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them" (Exodus 20:5). Some of the pagans regard their idols as objects not of mere reverence, but as their actual gods.

From the very earliest time of Christianity the Church encouraged

the ornamentation of places of public worship with painting of crosses and figures, In the Catacombs are to be seen a great variety of these primitive pictures. They are mostly the representation of subjects taken from Holy Scripture exemplifying the Catholic religion. They are well known to all students of antiquity and some of them have been declared by competent judges to date even from the second century of the Christian era, In Africa we have the authority of Tertullian for the existence of the figure of the Good Shepherd upon the Christian chalices.

It cannot be doubted that such representations elevate the minds of worshippers. As already pointed out, the representation of Christ hanging on the cross must awaken in our minds the remembrance of His sufferings endured for our sins. He so loved us as to deliver Himself up to death for us. The religious thoughts created by the representation prompt us to manifest by some exterior tokens the grateful affection of our hearts and must induce us to humble ourselves in its presence and to express our feelings of love and sorrow for our share in causing the sufferings and agony depicted before our eyes.

The Council of Trent carefully expresses the real meaning of the veneration shown by Catholics to the images and representation of Our Lord and His saints. According to the practice of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, coming down to us from the earliest times of the Christian religion, the faithful are taught the lawful use of images of Christ, of the Mother of God, and of the saints, which are set up chiefly in the temples of God and receive due honour and veneration. It is not believed that in these images there is any divine character or power for which they are to be reverenced or that any trust is reposed in the images themselves, as the pagans did of old who put their trust in idols, but any honour shown to the Christian images is referred to the prototypes they represent: so that in the images which we kiss and before which we kneel we adore Christ and reverence the saints whom the images represent.

Fifteen hundred years ago Saint Paulinus of Nola, when he erected a church and dedicated it to Saint Felix, adorned it with a great number of sacred objects, declaring in a poem he wrote in Latin:

> To us it seemed a useful work to paint

With sacred scenes the temple of this saint.

Prudentius in the fifth century tells us that his devotion was enkindled as he looked upon the picture of the sufferings endured by the martyrs for the Faith, which he saw depicted around their tombs and in their churches. In particular he describes his visit to Forum Cornelie, the modern Imola where the body of the Christian hero Saint Cassian* was buried under a magnificent altar, over which in a fine picture were represented the sufferings and cruel martyrdom of the Saints. He says he was so moved by this representation that he threw himself prostrate before it, kissed the altar and wept over the wounds that sin had inflicted on his own soul. He exhorts his readers to join with him in asking the saint to present their petitions for the Divine mercy, and assures them that the saint will not only hear their request but will extend to them his patronage.

(*Note: Saint Cassian was a schoolmaster who was put to death for the Catholic Faith under Julian the Apostate. His scholars were compelled to act as executioners of his martyrdom. They were directed to stab their teacher with their styles or metal pens. His body is still venerated at Imola, under the high-altar of the cathedral.*)

At Rome the same Saint Prudentius found, on his arrival, manifestations of the piety of the Christians in the adornment of the tombs of the martyrs. He described with minuteness the church of Saint Hippolytus, and the paintings which in the fifth century decorated the tomb of that Christian hero. From his verses a Protestant French writer, Le Clerc, gives the following comment: "It ought to be observed, that upon the grave there was an altar, on which the Eucharist was celebrated, so that the image was placed precisely upon the altar, where they are wont to place them now in our churches."

The celebrated Sir Humphry Davy puts into the mouth of his Catholic friend this reply to the objection to the use made of images by Christians: "It seemed as if the grossness of our material senses required some assistance from the eye in fixing or perpetuating the character of religious instinct; and the Church to which I belong, and I may say the whole Christian Church in early times, allowed visible images, pictures, statues, and relics as the means of

awakening the stronger devotional feelings."

We have been accused of worshipping the inanimate objects, but this is a very false notion of the nature of our Faith; we regard the images merely as visible objects representing spiritual existences, and we no more worship them than the Protestant worships his Bible, when he kisses it under a solemn religious feeling.

In England, in the old churches built in Catholic times, there was generally a gallery which crossed the nave at the entrance of the choir or chancel. This was called the rood-loft because it had upon it a great crucifix, or as it was anciently called the rood, facing the people. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the people were incited by the preaching of the fanatical religious Reformers to destroy these crucifixes, the statues of the Blessed Mother of God, and those of the patron saints; and to destroy, too, the painted windows, which had been looked upon as the illustrated books of the poor. By a decree of the Government in 1548 the crucifix was taken down and subsequently the royal arms with the lion and the unicorn were placed in the position of the rood and the images of Mary and John. Instead of the appropriate device of the Christian religion, the representation of our bleeding Saviour, were displayed the royal arms and its supporters.

# Use and Meaning of Lights

In the temple services the fact of the use of candles and lamps is too well known to be called in question, God commanded Moses to make the seven-branched candlestick, which was among the trophies brought to Rome from the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, as may be seen sculptured upon the arch set up in Rome to commemorate his triumphs. Among the ornaments which Solomon made for the Temple were the ten golden candlesticks, five on the right hand and five on the left.

From the earliest times of the Christian Church lights and lamps were employed in the service. Some of the Fathers by their accidental references to candles testify to their use. Saint Athanasius, for example, in 341 speaks of the pagans plundering Christian churches and burning before their idols the tapers offered by the faithful to honour the Saints.

In the Apocalypse Saint John describes his vision of the worship of the Son of man in heaven. "I saw," he writes, "in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks one like the Son of man" (Apocalypse 1:13).

This form of worship in heaven is the foundation of the special ritual adoration actually practised in this world. We are united here on earth to the Church triumphant, and we are to unite with it in the words of praise: why not also in the actual adjuncts of worship such as the use of lights which were certainly ordained by Almighty God in the ritual of the Old Law? Religion has the same object now as in the Old Dispensation.

We may affirm certainly that lights have a definite meaning and significance. It cannot be wrong to use them, or else God would never have commanded their use; nor would Saint John have seen them in the vision of worship in heaven.

To us they are so familiar that we can conceive nothing else. In the first place they are symbols of joy. They are also a proclamation of our Faith, and as such are used at Baptism. "I am the Light of the

world" (John 8:12), declared Our Lord, and His presence is declared by the flaming light. The consuming candle is a declaration of our generosity, and its consumption a manifestation of this generosity. They are a pledge of our charity and good example. "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

The light, too, is a symbol of union with God by prayer. Heat softens and consumes wax, so does the ardour of our love unite us with God.

In a sermon Saint Augustine exhorts his hearers to present either wax tapers or oil for the service of the Church. The use of lights in churches was attacked by Vigilantius and defended by Saint Jerome about the year 403. After declaring that it was a notorious fact which could not be overlooked that in those days the Christians were used to illuminate their churches with a profusion of wax tapers even during the midday light, Saint Jerome, defending the practice, gives various reasons to justify it. "Throughout all the churches of the East," he says, "wherever the Gospel is to be said," the Christians bring forth lights, though it is midday, in order to assert their joy and to proclaim that under the symbol of light may be indicated that light of which we read in the Psalms: "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my paths" (Psalm 118:105).

For the Eastern portion of the Church we have the testimony of Saint Paulinus of Nola (fourth century) who in his verses in honour of Saint Felix says:

> With numerous lamps are those bright altars crowned,
> And waxen tapers shedding perfume around
> From fragrant wicks, come forth a scented ray
> To gladden night, and add joy to radiant day.
> Meridian splendours thus light up the night
> And day itself illumined with sacred light
> Wears a new glory, borrowed from those rays
> That stream from countless lamps in never-ending blaze. (translated by Dr Rock)

The Christian poet Prudentius (fourth century) gives ample

testimony to the use of lamps and tapers in the Christian churches of Gaul, Spain, and Italy, and asserts that the practice had come down to his time from the early days of the- persecutions, and especially speaking of the martyrdom of Saint Lawrence and the meeting of the early Christians in the Catacombs, he speaks of the lights of tapers.

The old liturgies of the Church and the rite, especially, of ordination show the same usage. Tapers, too, are used to honour the presence of Our Lord in the Sacrifice of the Mass, and in Benediction, where they proclaim our joy in the presence of Our Saviour and proclaim our lively faith in the Real Presence. In the same way the sanctuary lamp burning before the tabernacle should urge us to reverence and love whenever we see it in our churches. It is the continuance in the New Dispensation of the ordinance of God that in the Temple before the Holy of Holies "a lamp may burn always" (Exodus 27:20) to show that God dwelt there amongst his Chosen people.

On two special days of the Christian year the Church solemnly blesses the candles. The first is upon the 2nd February - the purification or, as it was called in Catholic England, "Candlemass" day. The feast is common to the Church in the East and West and dates from the earliest days of Christianity. One of Saint John Chrysostom's sermons was preached on this festival. The candles thus solemnly blessed are carried alight in the procession which takes place afterwards. The symbolical meaning of this ceremony is that the faithful should, with holy Simeon, recognise in the Infant Jesus the Saviour of the world - a Light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel - and they should be taught by the burning tapers, which they carry that their faith must be fed and increased by the exercise of good works through which they are to become a light to shine before men.

The ceremony of this blessing is one of the most solemn benedictions of the Church, and the four prayers said by the celebrant are very beautiful and full of meaning. For example, let us take the third prayer, which is as follows:

"O Lord Jesus Christ, the true Light which illumines everyone coming into this world, pour forth Thy blessing on these waxen tapers, render them holy by the light of Thy grace, and mercifully

grant, that as these lights lit with visible flame dispel the darkness, so our hearts, lit up by the invisible fire, that is by the splendour of the Holy Spirit, may be freed from all blindness of vice, and the eyes of our minds being cleansed we may be able to recognise what is pleasing to Thee and useful for our salvation, so that after the darkness of this world we may deserve to come to the light that never fails, through Thee, O Jesus Christ, Saviour of the world, Who in the all-perfect Trinity livest and reignest God through all ages."

Another great ceremony in relation to the candles is the solemn blessing on Holy Saturday of the Paschal candle. The origin of this Easter ceremony is somewhat uncertain, but Saint Augustine treats it even in his days as very ancient. It certainly existed in Rome in the fifth century, as may be seen in the *Liber Pontificalis* (417-18). It has been conjectured that it derived its origin from a practice long in use at Constantinople of illuminating the streets on Easter Eve to express the universal joy at the Resurrection. The beautiful hymn chanted by the deacon at the Mass, the *Exultet*, is generally regarded as the work of Saint Augustine, though in process of time it has been added to and elaborated by holy prelates. Saint Augustine himself refers to his composition.

The Paschal Candle itself is of unusual size. Towards the middle are inserted five grains of incense in the form of across. These typify the five wounds of Christ and the spice with which His body was embalmed. The candle itself is regarded as an emblem of Our Lord. Before it is lighted it figures His death and repose in the tomb. When lighted it represents the glory of His Resurrection.

The Paschal candle before being lighted has another meaning. It is the figure of the cloud which moved before the Israelites by day, and when lighted of the pillar of fire which led them through the Red Sea. In the service of Holy Saturday there is used a triple candle the branches of which all spring from one stem, This signifies the three Persons in one God. The candle is lighted at all ceremonies during the Easter time till the Ascension. This signifies the joy of the Church at the Resurrection and the living presence of the Saviour in the world after the Resurrection.

Finally, at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament the lights which surrounded the sacred Host are signs of jubilation at His presence,

and our acts of faith, love, and joy should be true and living acts ascending to God on high,

# Use and Meaning of Incense

In the Liturgy of the the Catholic Church the use of incense is conspicuous. The burning of incense as a sign of worship of God has come down to us from the time of the law given to Moses, who was specially instructed to make use of it in the services of the Temple. "Thou shalt make also an altar to burn incense," was God's injunction as we read in the Book of Exodus (30:1), "and thou shalt overlay it with the purest gold. . . . And thou shalt make to it a crown of gold round about. . . . And Aaron shall burn sweet-smelling incense upon it in the morning. . . . Take unto thee spices, stacte and onycha, galbanum of sweet savour, and the clearest frankincense, all shall be of equal weight. And thou shalt make incense compounded by the work of the perfumer: well tempered together, and pure, and most worthy of sanctification. And when thou hast beaten all into very small powder, thou shalt set of it before the tabernacle of the testimony, in the place I will appear to thee. Most holy shall this incense be unto you. You shall not make such a composition for your own uses, because it is holy to the Lord."

Again the Lord gave directions how it was to be used in His worship. The high-priest was commanded to take the censer, which he had filled with burning coals from the altar and taking up in his hand the compounded incense he was to go in within the veil into the holy place that when the perfumes were put upon the coals, the cloud therefrom might cover the oracle (Leviticus 16:12-13). Amongst the vessels provided for the service of the Lord were

censers which Solomon caused to be made of the purest gold (3 Kings 7:50).

The custom of employing incense in the religious ceremonies of the Temple gave the Psalmist the beautiful simile where he begged that his prayers might ascend before God like incense, and this prayer is made use of by the Church in the blessing of the incense at the solemn Mass. The celebrant in that blessing prays: "Through the intercession of the blessed Michael the Archangel standing at the right side of the altar of incense, and of all his chosen Spirits, be pleased, O Lord, to bless and to receive as an odour of sweetness this incense, through Christ Our Lord."

Then when the priest has received the censer he incenses the bread and wine and says: "May this blessed incense ascend to Thee, O Lord, and may Thy mercy come down upon us." In continuing the incensing of the altar he prays: "May my prayer be borne into Thy sight, O Lord, like incense, and the raising of my hands be as the evening sacrifice," and at the close of the actual incensing he adds: "May the fire of Thy love and the flame of Thy everlasting love be lit up in us, O Lord."

It should be remembered, as Saint Luke tells us in his Gospel (1:10), that it was while all the multitude of the people was praying without the veil of the Holy of Holies, there appeared to Zachary an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

It is an ascertained fact that among Oriental nations the act of offering incense was regarded not only as a gesture of personal reverence, but also of distinct religious homage and adoration. The pagans looked upon the offering of incense in this light, and it is for this reason that, as we read in the Acts of the Christian martyrs, the Christians steadily refused to burn incense before the idols, as it would in the minds of the pagan persecutors be regarded as acknowledging the idols as their gods and as a denial of their faith in Christianity.

We may note that when the Magi came to Bethlehem and fell down to adore the newborn Saviour and recognise His Divinity they presented Him with gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And Saint John in the Apocalypse in depicting his vision of the mystic sacrifices of the Lamb in heaven makes use almost certainly of imagery taken from the ceremonial employed by the early Church for the offering up of the unbloody Sacrifice of the same Lamb of God on the Christian altars. The Apostle specially notes that the "Angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given him much incense, that he should offer the prayers of all the saints, upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the Saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel" (Apocalypse 8:3).

There can be no manner of doubt that the Christians adopted from the Jews the practice of using incense in the celebration of the Liturgy.

There is a passage in the writings of Saint Hippolytus of Porto (third century), adduced by the Protestant Bishop Beveridge, which conclusively proves the use of incense in the Church of the third century, by the prophetic remark that at the consummation of the world the Churches would be plunged in great grief as they witnessed the cessation of sacrifice and incense.

Saint Ambrose in the fourth century exclaims: "Oh that with us, whilst incensing the altar and offering the Sacrifice, an angel would assist - nay, would make himself visible."

Saint Ephrem, a Father of the Syriac Church who died in A.D. 373, in his will directed that no aromatic perfumes should be used at his funeral, but that the spices should be given to the sanctuary and offered to God, and the incense be burned in God's house.

It should be understood that in all the Oriental rites the use is the same as among the Latins.

The spiritual meaning of incense is evident. It would be difficult to find anything which could be a clearer symbol of prayer.

The burning of incense at the altar indicates that the place is holy and consecrated to the Almighty in whose honour this incense is burnt.

Above all things the rising of the incense should teach us and urge us to let our prayers ascend to the throne of God and plead for His help and mercy.

Pope Saint Gregory the Great, writing upon the meaning of the gifts brought by the Magi to present to Our Lord, says: "The gold is proper to a king, incense is for the sacrifice to God, and myrrh is for preserving a human body. So that the Magi when they presented these gifts they proclaimed their mystical meaning with the gold they professed that he was king, with the incense that he was God, and with the myrrh confessed His humanity."

# The Rosary of Our Blessed Lady

A distinguishing mark of a Catholic is certainly the devotion and love he manifests to the Mother of God. This is the object of many attacks made against the Church. Non-Catholics very generally fail to understand the position which the Virgin Mother holds in the hearts of Catholics, and this arises mainly because they do not themselves truly realise the position she holds in regard to Our Blessed Lord. It has been so from the earliest ages of Christianity, so that we truly say of her that she is the guardian of the Faith - the touchstone of a true belief in the Divinity of Our Blessed Lord. The assertion and firm belief of her motherhood of Christ affirm the manhood and the Divine nature united in the person of Jesus. So that the Church confidently says: *Cunctas hereses sola interemisti in universo mundo* - "You alone have overthrown all heresies in the whole world." It was the proclamation of her motherhood of Christ which destroyed the Arian heresy - which denied the Divinity to the person of Christ - and called forth the declaration "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us," etc. It is through her that the Church asserts the true humanity of Our Lord and the two natures of Divinity and humanity in the one person of Christ. She was His human mother - the mother of the man Jesus who at the same time was God. Therein lies the greatness of Mary and all her prerogatives which, with the Church, we so earnestly claim for her. The story that is told of the learned Archbishop Whateley and his Irish Catholic gardener puts the matter in the clearest light: "Pat," said the Archbishop to him one day, "what I object most strongly against you Papists, is the great devotion and reverence which you show to the Virgin Mother. You should know that she was a creature like my mother." - "That is true so far, my

Lord," replied Pat, "but even you must agree that there is a mighty difference in the sons." It is precisely this which every Catholic, no matter how poor and illiterate, fully understands and believes.

Moreover, she has a special attraction for the hearts of all of us, because she was charged in the person of Saint John with being our Mother too. The faithful and loving Saint John tells us that at the foot of the cross upon which Our Redeemer was offering Himself in anguish for our sins, when about to expire, stood Mary His Mother. "When Jesus therefore had seen His mother and the disciple standing whom he loved, He saith to His mother: Woman, behold thy son. After that, He saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother. And from that hour the disciple took her," and in our behalf, "to his own" (John 19:26). If this be the true relation between us and the Virgin Mother of God, it stands to common sense that we should reverence and cultivate the closest possible union with her, and can certainly look with confidence to her help in our many needs and difficulties. She must necessarily be all-powerful before God's throne and her prayers must obtain what is according to His will, when, as we say, "We fly to thy patronage." We should hardly need any argument to be devout to His Mother - the Mother of God and our Mother - and it is for this reason the Church has instituted so many feasts in her honour to recall to us our duty and to keep before our minds the intimate relation which exists between her and us. We are urged to show ourselves devout to her and to cultivate the spirit of bringing her into our lives whenever we can. We should be very neglectful of our best religious interests if we neglected to think of her and to invoke her aid in prayer. Of all the prayers that are used in her honour by the Church there can be no doubt that the recitation of the rosary is the most useful and the most profitable. It is well adapted for the double end of begging God for grace to feel a personal sympathy with Our Blessed Lady, and of actually showing and exercising this feeling.

The late Archbishop Ullathorne once wrote: "The Rosary is chiefly useful for two classes of people: those who like it and those who don't. The first class of course find help and consolation in the exercise, and the second might quickly find the same spiritual profit, if they would cease to regard it as the recitation of simple prayers intended only for the unlearned. The mere lesson in humble

thinking which is implied in making use of it is useful as a condition for prayer. The meditations upon the mysteries of our Salvation, which set before the mind in orderly sequence in the various decades the mysteries of our Faith, are a fruitful source of grace to all of us, whilst all can enter heart and soul into the repeated petition for help to Our Mother the Queen of Heaven in our present needs and 'at the dread hour of our death.'"

It is difficult to see what objections can be made to the devotion of Our Lady's rosary. We are called Christians because we profess to be followers or imitators of Christ. "I have given you an example," He says, "that as I have done to you, so you do also" (John 13:15). Christ, says Saint Peter, left us an example that we should follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21). But how can we imitate that which we see not? The very notion of a pattern or example is something placed before the eyes for us to look at and copy. Therefore Our Lord said to those who were with Him, "Blessed are the eyes that see the things that you see. For I say unto you that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see and have not seen them; and to hear the things which you hear and have not heard them" (Luke 10:23). Alas! then, for us, who no longer know Christ according to the flesh (2 Corinthians 5:16). Is this blessing lost for us? No, most certainly "no." Listen to the words of Our Blessed Lord to His Apostles: "Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and have believed" (John 20:29). As if He said, blessed are they who, when the testimony of their own eyes fails, trust in the testimony of those who have seen. This is the meaning of Faith. It is the evidence of things unseen, as Saint Paul puts it (Hebrews 11:1). It is as it were using others' eyes, as Saint John says, "He that saw it hath given testimony . . . that you also may believe" (John 19:35). Faith sees, not however with her own eyes, but with those of. others.

Faith, then, has to look on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2), but with whose eyes? This is the one important question. For we may look on Him simply with hatred and terror, as the devils, of whom the Apostle says that they believe and tremble (James 2:19). In this case our faith would be as barren and profitless as theirs. For the very soul of faith is the affection which it inspires in us. Faith without love is absolutely nothing. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Apostles, and

the Blessed Virgin all looked on the same Christ, they saw the same miracles, the same outward appearance was exhibited to all; but what a difference was there in the impression which the sight made on their hearts! In some it produced simply hatred and envy; others it moved not from their usual indifference; and in others it excited the greatest tenderness and love. When therefore we ask the question with whose eyes we are to look on Christ, we mean, whose affections are we to encourage within our own hearts, whose feelings towards Him are we to copy?

If we search Holy Scripture for an answer we shall find by a comparison of many texts, that His Blessed Mother is set forth to us as the pattern whom we are to copy in our love for our Redeemer. In contemplating Him we must see with her eyes, we must hear with her ears; in a word we sympathise with her in all the joys and sorrows which she felt in the life and death of her Divine Son.

Isaiah in speaking of the advent of Christ says: "A child is born to us, and a Son is given *to us*" (Isaiah 9:6). In the same way the angel announced to the shepherds: "I bring you good tidings of great joy . . . for this day is *born to you* a Saviour" (Luke 2:10). If He is born to us, He is in a manner our Son; He is, according to the title by which He most commonly designates Himself "The Son of Man." Nay, in one place He expressly gives to His disciples a title of maternity: "Whosoever shall do the will of God, he is My brother and sister and *mother*" (Mark 3:35). The incommunicable glory of His Father can be shared by no one, but His true followers may share the glories of His Blessed Mother, they may in a measure, according to His own word, partake of her maternity.

Now we may well ask by what means are we to obtain a participation in this glorious privilege? I would answer - chiefly by sympathy. If we always endeavour to feel towards Christ as His Mother felt, to rejoice in her joys, to mourn in her sorrow, then we shall, as the prophet declares, share in her consolations. Speaking of the birth of the Messiah, Isaiah says: "Before she was in labour, she brought forth: before her time came to be delivered she brought forth a man child . . . rejoice for joy with her, all you that mourn for her. That you may suck and be filled with the breasts of her consolations . . . and flow with delights from the abundance of her

glory" (Isaiah 16:7-11). It may be noted here that this passage, though spoken of Jerusalem, refers to the Blessed Virgin, and through her to the Church, because Jerusalem and Sion are the types of her, as she again is of the Church. Saint Augustine says of her: "She, the Virgin Mary, is the figure of Holy Church" (*Tract. de Symb. ad Catech.*).

But it is not so much in joy as in adversity and sorrow that natural tenderness is shown: "A brother is proved in distress," says the wise man (Proverbs 17:17). Indeed, we should be more ready "to weep with them that weep" than to rejoice with them that rejoice (Romans 12:15), for as Solomon says: "‘ It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting . . . the heart of the wise is where there is mourning" (Ecclesiasticus 7:3,5).

But we have "a more firm prophetical word," which commands our especial sympathies to be given to the heart of Mary in her sorrows and desolation. It is thus that the prophet Amos describes the Passion of Our Lord: "It shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that the sun shall go down at midday, and I will make the earth dark in the day of light. And I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation . . . and I will make it as the *mourning of an only Son*, and the latter end thereof as a bitter day" (Amos 8:9). And further the Prophet Zaccharias speaks even more plainly in the same sense: "I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the *spirit of grace and prayers*, and they shall look upon Me, whom they have pierced. And they shall mourn for Him *as one mourneth for an only Son*, and they shall grieve over Him, as the manner is to grieve for an only son" (Zachariah 12:10). This passage is applied by the Evangelist Saint John (19:37) to Our Blessed Lord. Now who alone of all created beings could naturally feel this grief? Who alone could look upon Him as her only first-born Son? Only the Mother of Sorrows, standing by the cross; and it is of her grief we must all try to partake: Nay, it is so needful, so beneficial for us to do so, that God will give us a particular and special grace to enable us so to do, and for which the Church encourages us to pray (*Fac me tecum pie flere, etc.*). God does not grant a special grace to do unimportant and indifferent things. He would not pour it forth in vain. And how important God considers this sympathy in the sorrows of Mary to

be, we may see from the words of holy Simeon to the Blessed Virgin on the Presentation of Her Divine Son in the Temple: "And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed" (Luke 2:35). Mary is placed before our eyes with her heart pierced by the sword, the sword of Our Lord's sufferings, and according as we sympathise with her or not do we reveal and make manifest the thoughts of our hearts. If we are cold and unmoved, we show that we have a hard and stony heart unworthy to partake in those blessings which are promised only "to men of goodwill," to the tender-hearted and compassionable. Thus again Our Lord in His last discourse to His Apostles before His Passion took occasion to compare their state of anxiety to that of a mother in her anguish, and also to promise them that out of sorrow would come joy, "and your joy no man shall take from you" (John 16:21,22).

It will be easily seen from considerations such as these that persons who are accustomed to say the rosary of the Blessed Virgin should make themselves very familiar with the circumstances of those fifteen great events of our Redemption which we pass in review before our minds in saying our beads. In order to gain this familiarity it is necessary to have made frequently each separate mystery the subject of our thoughts, etc. We should make ourselves familiar with the circumstances attending the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Purification, and the Finding of our Lord with the Doctors in the Temple; with His Agony in the Garden, with His Crowning with Thorns, His bearing His Cross and His Crucifixion; with His Resurrection, Ascension, the Mission of the Holy Ghost, and the Assumption and Coronation of Our Blessed Mother in Heaven. We should also be quite familiar with the lessons of humility, faith, charity, and contrition or other virtues which they particularly convey.

For this purpose there are perhaps few better preparations than hymns on the subject of the different mysteries. The verses, for example, remain in our minds and are easily brought forth from our memory to suggest the circumstances we would recall. What, for instance, can be a more beautiful example of the thoughts that should pass through our minds whilst saying the decade of the Nativity than Father Faber's hymn to the Infant Jesus. The simple words of this hymn bring before us the scene of Bethlehem vividly

and demand our attention and love. Take the first verse as a sample:

> Dear Little One! How sweet Thou art,
> Thine eyes how bright they shine,
> So bright they almost seem to speak
> When Mary's look meets Thine.

A series of hymns of this sort on the fifteen mysteries would do much to facilitate the use of the rosary.

After having made ourselves familiar with the mysteries, it might be useful to divide each into ten points, which we might rapidly review in our mind as we tell our beads. They would be as a moving panorama, whilst we are saying the ten Hail Marys of each mystery. Thus in the third of the joyful mysteries, the Nativity, during the first Hail Mary, a consolation, a full and perfect joy, like that of the same mother when her anguish is past: "A woman when she is in labour hath sorrow, because her hour is come, but when she hath brought forth the child she remembereth no more the anguish for joy, that a man is born into the world. So also you now indeed have sorrow, but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you" (John 16:21). Thus the Holy Scripture in many passages, in some indeed obscurely, but in others very clearly, sends us to the Mother of Our Lord as the pattern of our joy and sorrow and the object of our charitable congratulation and condolence in His Nativity, in His Passion, and in His triumph. He is born to us; therefore we must rejoice as a mother over her son. He died for us and we are expressly told that our mourning is to be that of one mourning for her first-born son, the mourning of Our Mother standing by the cross. He rose again: our joy is to be that of a mother who "remembereth no more her anguish." Scripture sends us to Her, promising if we truly sympathise with her, we shall be "filled with the breasts of her consolations, and flow with delights from the abundance of her glory" (Isaiah 66:7). It is almost needless to insist that this sympathy is not to be a mere barren, mawkish feeling, similar to that produced by reading an affecting story or novel, or seeing a tragedy. Such a feeling as this would not require that mighty preparation which is promised in the words of the prophets:

"I will pour out upon them the spirit of grace and prayers." But this spirit is required to enable us to abstract ourselves from our own cares, sorrows, and pleasures, and to unite our hearts with the maternal heart of Mary, so as to enable us like her "to mourn for Him as one mourneth for an only son." This is the object of this double gift of the spirit, the spirit of grace and the spirit of prayers. The first to draw us towards divine things, the second to enable our mind to forget itself and to throw itself entirely upon great facts which it contemplates, or, in other words, the feeling of sympathy is a gift of God's grace and when it is called forth and exercised it is in the way of prayer. If this is the case, we may expect to find in general use in the Catholic Church a form of prayer adapted both for begging God to give us the grace to feel this sympathy and as a means of showing and receiving this holy feeling. Nor shall we be disappointed. We shall find that the popular devotion of the rosary is most beautifully outfitted for the double end. For, how should we ask for grace, but in that prayer which Our Lord taught us, and which He commanded us to use when we pray. And how should we express our sympathy in prayer, but in the shape of exclamations of congratulation and condolence. And these are precisely the two parts of which the rosary is composed: the Lord's Prayer and the Angelic Salutation.

There are three great divisions, or chaplets, in the rosary, corresponding to the three great divisions of Our Lord's life indicated above: His Incarnation, His Passion, and His triumph. They are called the joyful, the sorrowful, and the glorious mysteries of the rosary. Each of these again is subdivided into five mysteries corresponding to five great events connected with the Incarnation, the Passion, or the triumph of Our Lord. To each of these mysteries is allotted a certain number of prayers and these prayers are the same for all the divisions, but of course they take a different colour according to the feelings of the mind in using them.

First of all we say the Lord's Prayer, in which we beg God to give us grace to pray as we ought, to meditate with attention and sympathise truly with the joy or sorrow, which is proposed to us, and to obtain all the fruit that can be gathered from this holy exercise. Then keeping ever before the mind the mystery set before us, we say ten times the Angelic Salutation or Hail Mary, which

receives a meaning of congratulation or of condolence from the intention with which it is said. In our own, every-day lives we should probably use the very same words whether we were saluting a widow or a bride, but with what different feelings and with what a different tone of voice we pronounce the usual greeting: "Good morning"? So it is with the words of the Angelic Salutation. The same words "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee," may be used as the expressions of different and even contrary feelings.

We say the Lord's Prayer once and the Hail Mary ten times to each mystery, not, as Protestants object to us, because we honour the Blessed Virgin ten times more than we honour God, for we Catholics never think of comparing the honour due to a creature to that of the Infinite Creator - such a comparison would be blasphemy - but because we use the Lord's Prayer simply as a direct petition for grace, and the Hail Mary as the foundation and vehicle of our meditation.

A petition may be asked in a moment, but a meditation cannot be gone through so rapidly; it requires time for our thought to mature; and the time occupied by saying ten times the Hail Mary is supposed to be long enough to keep the mind fixed on any one mystery, in order to obtain fruit from our consideration.

Of course they may be said rapidly or slowly, according to the proficiency which the person has made in the act of meditation. For one person's mind can go through as much thought in one minute as would take another person a quarter of an hour.

But the Hail Mary consists not only of the salutation "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with Thee, blessed art Thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus." It contains also a short petition to the Blessed Virgin for help: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and in the hour of our death."

Is not this also, it may be asked, a petition for grace?

In what way, therefore it may be asked, can we reconcile the use of this part with the notion of the rosary being a mere expression of sympathy with the Blessed Virgin? It will not, I think, be difficult to show the consistency. The Blessed Virgin did not undertake the high

office of Mother of the Redeemer for her own sake, as He was incarnate and died not only for her but for us also; so did she conceive herself to be thus highly favoured, not only for herself but for us also. For us she nursed her Divine Infant, for us she willingly saw Him die on the cross, and bore the sword that pierced her own soul. In looking on her Son, she saw not only her own exaltation, but the merciful reception of Israel promised to Abraham and his seed for ever. In watching over Him, she felt that He was not hers alone, but ours also. Is it possible, then, that she should have been actuated by any other than feelings of the deepest interest for us? Could she have felt indifferent to the fate of those for whom her Son shed His blood? No, most emphatically "no," her whole life was one continual care for us, for those who were to be saved by her Son, and were to be made her children by becoming His brethren. And how can we fully sympathise with her without entering into this feeling of hers, without reminding her of this her care and begging her still to remember us in our many needs? Sympathy moreover is mutual; a person cannot love and sympathise with another, unless he has reason to suppose that this other loves and sympathises with him.

Reasonably, then, do we conclude every expression of our love and sympathy with the Blessed Virgin with a petition to her to exhibit her love and sympathy for us by remembering us before the Throne of Grace, not only now, but chiefly in the dread hour of our death. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death."

As an example of the manner in which we may divide up our thoughts during the saying of the Hail Mary, we may take the first joyful mystery. In saying the first Hail Mary, we may picture to ourselves the Eternal Father declaring that the fullness of time has come and sending the angel Gabriel to announce to the Blessed Virgin that she is the destined Mother of Christ, the Redeemer. During the second we may picture to ourselves the archangel entering the abode of Mary; her confusion and the salutation of Gabriel. During the third, the Annunciation, that Mary is to be the Mother of the Messias. During the fourth, the refusal of the Blessed Virgin, on the ground of her vow not to know man. The fifth, the explanation that the conception is to be supernatural, of the Holy

Ghost, not of man. The sixth, the consent of the Virgin, *Ecce Ancella Domini* - "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to Thy word." The seventh, the Word descends and becomes man in the womb of the Virgin. The eighth, the eternal and infinite Word, reposes in the tabernacle of the Virgin. The ninth, the Blessed Virgin, the throne of the Almighty God, from which He rules the universe. The tenth, the humility of Our Lady in her immeasurable dignity. The mind may often be helped in forming these pictures by our having before our eyes an image ora picture of the event.

The Church recommends the use of such aids to devotion, and any good artist who would unite his talents to those of a poet, to produce such a Rosary book would confer a great favour on the faithful who use this devotion. Another help which in Old Catholic England was frequently used, as indeed in Germany at the present day, is to recall the mystery, we are considering at the end of the first part of the Hail Mary. Thus supposing we are saying the first joyful mystery: after the word *Jesus,* we can mentally add "‘ who was born into the world for our sakes" and then Holy Mary, etc.

Let me give one more example of the points of meditation on the eighth mystery - the Crowning with Thorns. At the first bead we might represent to ourselves the soldiers platting a crown of thorns, Jesus looking calmly on. At the second, Jesus stripped of His garments and clothed in a purple robe. At the third Jesus crowned with thorns. At the fourth, a reed is put in His hand in mockery of a sceptre. At the fifth the reed is taken out of His hand and the soldiers strike Him on the head, driving the thorns deeper into His flesh. At the sixth, they bow and pass before Him and salute Him as King of the Jews. At the seventh, they spit in His face and strike Him, causing the thorns to tear His flesh more and more. At the eighth, Pilate shows Him to the infuriated multitude, saying: "Behold the man," hoping that the sight of Him and His miserable plight will move their hearts. At the ninth, the Jews all cry out that He should be crucified. At the tenth, a consideration that it is for me that He suffered, and that I myself am the executioner who by my sins have heaped all these miseries and insults on my Saviour.

Each decade is usually concluded by a "Glory be to the Father" to

thank God for the graces we have received by the mystery we have celebrated, but this is not essential to the integrity of the rosary.

One of the best books of meditations on the life of Our Lord is that of Saint Bonaventure, which will furnish abundant matter to anyone who wishes to use the rosary as his manual of meditation.

# Scapulars

The devotion of Catholics to the scapular is very old and wide-spread. The name is derived from the Latin *scapula*, a shoulder, since the badge worn consists of two pieces of cloth hung across the shoulder. Originally in religious orders it was probably a kind of apron to protect the dress or cassock during work. Saint Benedict, for instance, says the monk is to have a *scapulare propter opera*, "for working purposes." When in process of time people of all kinds desired to have a part in the prayers and good works of some religious house or body, they were at first received in a more or less solemn way in the chapter house of the monastery and their names entered in a register of those sharing in the good works and prayers of the religious. Of course all these were expected on their side to help the monastery as far as possible and to uphold it and its interests so far as they could. People of all kinds, kings, nobles, bishops and clergy, and even the poor, are to be found on the rolls of these *confratres*.

In course of time the desire for this holy union of lay folk and professed religious grew to such proportions that the religious orders one after another arranged a small cloth badge to signify the aggregation to the special body and investment in which, by a properly constituted authority, gives the title to be considered a member of the congregation into which the person was admitted by the small scapular.

The best known of the numerous confraternities wearing the small scapular, is that of the Carmelites - Our Lady of Mount Carmel. It consists of two small squares of brown cloth of the colour of the Carmelite habit, joined together by two tapes as a yoke to be worn over the shoulders. A great literature has sprung up regarding the

origin and history of the numerous privileges and indulgences which are attached to the wearing of this scapular. No useful purpose would be served by entering upon this question. Those who are interested may find in an excellent small book upon the devotion of scapulars, by the present General of the Carmelites, Dr. McGinnis, everything that need be said about the matter, and indeed about the other scapulars. The four oldest forms of scapulars are those of the Carmelites, Servites, Trinitarians, and Mercedarians. Later on, the devotion of wearing a scapular was adopted by the Franciscans and Dominicans, though the former chose as their badge a girdle instead of a scapular. The Confraternity of the Scapular of Mount Carmel can be proved to go back before the year 1280. Of course, as those who wear the scapular are associated with the Order to which it belongs, it is obviously necessary for them to be enrolled regularly by someone who has the power from the Order to assure them of their share in the prayers and privileges. It is only when the name has been so registered that the person enjoys the indulgences and other favours accorded to such as wear the scapular.

Besides the brown scapular of Mount Carmel which is by custom called *the* Scapular, there are many others, as for instance the scapular of the Blessed Trinity, the red scapular of the Passion, the blue scapular of the Immaculate Conception, the black one of the Passion, the scapular of the Seven Dolours of Our Blessed Mother, the white scapular of Our Lady of Ransom, of the Virgin Mother of Good Counsel, the scapular of the Sacred Heart, that of Saint John of God, that of Saint Joseph, etc.

Of course all except those connected with the various orders are merely signs of a spiritual membership to which are attached certain indulgences and blessings, which can be obtained by those wearing the badge and fulfilling certain conditions. These various scapulars can be worn together in a specified order; the white scapular of the Holy Trinity coming first; but since the introduction of the scapular medal by Pope Pius X, this will serve for all as long as it receives the blessing for each separately.

The special purpose of each scapular may be seen in the blessing attached to each. As an example we may take the form of blessing

and enrolment of the scapular of Mount Carmel.

With the recipient kneeling before the altar the priest begins;

Show to us, O Lord, Thy mercy,
And give us Thy Salvation.
O Lord, hear my prayer,
And let my cry come to Thee, etc.

Let us pray.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, by Thy power sanctify this habit, which Thy servant will devoutly wear in honour of the Virgin Mother Mary of Mount Carmel. So that by the intercession of the same Virgin Mother, being defended from the evil power of the enemy, he may persevere in Thy Grace unto death. Who livest and reignest, etc.

# Honour and Intercession of Saints and Angels

Honour and invocation of the saints of God is a natural doctrine and one implied by the very spirit of Christianity. Obviously and necessarily our Religion cannot annul or contradict social feelings. It may and does perfect and purify them, and so we believe assuredly that death does not sever us from those who in life were the foundation and best examples of the Faith, but that we continue to be associated in some real way with those who have gone before us to eternal life. In the Apostles Creed we profess our belief in the communion of saints, or as it is expressed more fully in the Creed of Pope Pius: "I believe that the saints reigning together with Christ are to be honoured and invoked, and that they offer prayers to God for us."

Now the question is: Who are the saints with whom we hold communion and intercourse? We hold firmly that this does not merely imply communion with those still on earth, but saints wherever they may be. Admitted to the joy of God's presence in heaven, we feel and know that they do not forget us who are struggling in the same career and working and looking forward to the same reward, and who are so powerful before the Throne of Grace to help us.

The teaching of the Church is clear and definite as Saint Paul writes to the Hebrews (12:22-23): "But you are come to Mount Sion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the church of the first-born who are written in the heavens, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect."

The Creed of Pope Pius contains four points of our Catholic belief;

1. The saints in heaven are to be honoured.

2. They are to be invoked.

3. They pray for us, and

4. Their relics are to be held in veneration.

It is worth while to take each of these separately.

In the first place, any honour we may show the saints in no way interferes with the honour due to God alone, as those who have not the Catholic point of view sometimes object, Now we hold most definitely not only that it is not wrong to honour them, but that it would be wrong not to do so. Of course, to give them honour which is due to God alone would be impious and is never thought of by Catholics. But God contemplates another kind of honour which He orders to be paid by one creature to another. In the first Commandment, as taught in our catechisms, we are forbidden "to give to any creature whatsoever the honour due to God," which is supreme and absolute and due to Him for His own sake. But the inferior honour we give to creatures differs not only in *degree*, but in degree and kind from what we give to the Almighty, and such honour given to creatures is given not for their own sakes, but for God's sake, and it rests finally with Him as its ultimate cause and object. Saint Paul teaches: "Render therefore to all men their. dues. Tribute, to whom tribute is due: custom, to whom custom: fear, to whom fear: honour to whom honour" (Romans 13:7). As early as A.D. 787 the Church in the Council of Nicea defined the two kinds of honour and in her definitions she uses the theological terminology made use of by the Council. *Latria* is the supreme honour due to God and *Dulia* that given to creatures.

In the saints we honour three gifts. First the graces which they have been given by God, for which each of them could say with Saint Paul: "By the grace of God I am what I am" (Corinthians 15:10). Secondly, we reverence the merits which they obtained by their correspondence with God's grace. To deny *merits* is to deny the fruitfulness of God's grace, and is thus taking from God praise and glory. And thirdly, we praise and esteem them for that glory in heaven which is the result of the *merit* they obtained by their correspondence with God's grace. It was the thought of this glory which supported the saints during their troubles and trials in this life, and encouraged them to devote themselves to the love and service of the Almighty. As Saint Paul says: "I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory

to come that shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). Anyone who will refuse to honour these gifts of God in His saints, really does injury to the very honour and glory of God.

The Council of Trent lays it down as a point of Catholic Faith that the saints reigning in heaven with Christ, offer up their prayers to God for men. That it is good and profitable to invoke them as suppliants and to have recourse to their prayers and help in order to obtain favours from God through His Son Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Who is our *only* Redeemer and Saviour (Sess. xxv).

This teaching of the Council is forcibly upheld by Holy Scripture. It was God Himself Who first directed man to reverence the angels. He said to Moses: "Behold, I will send my angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey: and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. Take notice of him and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be condemned: for he will not forgive when thou hast sinned and my name is in him" (Exodus 23:20), or as another version has it: "In My name are his words."

In regard to the angels, and in particular to the angel guardians who have been appointed, according to the teaching of the Church, by God's loving kindness to watch over each of us, we should cultivate in our minds an abiding sense of their presence. The fact that we have each one of us a spiritual guide and monitor is not to be forgotten. Unfortunately art and poetry seem to have combined to give a false impression about these guardian spirits. Generally the artist represents the angel as guarding some small child, and in this way the Church's teaching that God, in His love, has given the charge of each individual soul from its creation to its final judgment, to some ministering angel, is unfortunately forgotten. Yet it is to us that the words are addressed: "Listen to his voice," etc. We truly never are alone, never without this real though unseen companion from birth to death. In youth and manhood, when passions grow and life's battles become fierce, we may look to the help of our guardian angel who is nearer to us than any other created being, and whose love is stronger than that of any parent or friend. And when the shadows are lengthening towards the sunset of life, it is consoling to believe that our lifelong friend is still at our side, and ready to bring us into the place God has prepared for us.

In Holy Scripture we find the patriarchs and saints bowing down before the angels and showing them the most profound respect. Thus Abraham on receiving the three angels in his tent fell prostrate at their feet; Lot, on seeing two angels that came to Sodom, rose up and worshipped prostrate on the ground; Josue, when he was in the field of Jericho, saw a man standing over against him holding a drawn sword and he went to him and asked: "Art thou one of ours, or of our adversaries?" And he answered: "No: but I am a prince of the host of the Lord and now I am come." Then Josue fell on his face to the ground and worshipping said: "What saith my lord to his servant?" - "Loose," said he, "thy shoes from thy feet: for the place whereon thou standest is holy" (Josue 5:13-16).

Scripture also makes it evident that angels and saints have taken an interest in the spiritual happiness and temporal prosperity of men. From the prophecy of Zacharias we understand how earnestly the angel of the Lord interceded for the Jews: "O Lord of hosts, how long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Juda, with which Thou hast been angry" (Zachariah 1:12).

The angel Raphael told Tobias: "When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead. . . I offered thy prayer to the Lord" (Tobias 12:12). The angel who came to make a revelation to Daniel thus spoke to the Prophet: "But the prince of the kingdom of the Persians resisted me one and twenty days, and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there by the king of the Persians" (Daniel 10:13).

King David, speaking of the man who dwelleth in the aid of the most High, declares that God "hath given His angels a charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Psalm 90:11).

Saint John in the Apocalypse expressly tells us that the saints above present our prayers before the Mercy Seat and thus become our intercessors. Whilst relating his vision of the heavenly Jerusalem he describes how he saw "The four and twenty ancients fell down before the Lamb, having everyone of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints" (Apocalypse 5:8).

It is very often noticed in the Old and New Testaments that the help of some special servant of God has been invoked, even when in this

life, by those who desire his help to obtain favour from God. The children of Israel, for instance, begged the holy Samuel to plead before Heaven for them: "Cease not," they said, "to cry to the Lord Our God for us, that He may save us from the hands of the Philistines" (1 Kings [1 Samuel] 7:8). And God Himself directed Eliphaz and Baldad to go to His servant Job and request him to pray for them (Job 42:7-8). Saint Paul is found ever requesting a remembrance in the prayers of the faithful, "that you help me in your prayers for me to God" (Romans 15:30), and he constantly promises his converts to pray for them. There can be no doubt that the Fathers of the Church from the earliest times clearly taught the need of seeking the intercession of the saints of God in heaven. Two early writers, Saint Paulinus of Nola and Saint Prudentius, are clear and insistent in their teaching of the Catholic doctrine of the Communion of Saints. The poet at the close of the fourth century certifies that the saints were recognised as the patrons of the world by all people professing to be Christians.

The inscriptions found in the Catacombs prove that the Christians in the days of persecution placed themselves under the protection of those who had gone before them to heaven.

Finally the mode of addressing the saints and invoking their aid is the clearest testimony to the Church's teaching in regard to the invocation of God's saints. In all the prayers to be found in the various liturgical books, missals, breviaries, etc., there is not one that is not directed to God alone. They begin always with an address to God such as: "O Almighty and Everlasting God," and end with: "Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, etc." What is asked merely is that the saint invoked may plead for us before the Throne of Grace from whose bountiful hands must come all the graces we need.

# Ashes

Ashes have from the earliest ages been associated with penance and repentance. Under the old dispensation this was the ordinary significance of ashes, especially when they were sprinkled upon the people's heads. From very early times the Church has used ashes as a symbol of penance, and as a sacramental to aid the Faithful to obtain the graces of humility and contrition.

Although Ash Wednesday, so called from the solemn ceremony of the blessing and distribution of ashes, may not have been the original beginning of Lent, it has for many centuries been regarded as the first day of the forty days Fast. The term Ash Wednesday has so entered into people's minds as connected with penance, fasting, and the season of Lent, that, although more than three centuries have elapsed since Parliament under Edward VI forbade the use of ashes, the term continues to maintain its ecclesiastical significance. (Just as Candlemas Day is always synonymous with the and February, the Feast of the Purification of our Blessed Lady, although the distribution of blessed candles was also forbidden at the same time by those who desired to destroy Catholic practices and their meaning.)

The present Ash Wednesday ceremony probably owes its origin to an ancient practice which required Christians guilty of grievous offences against God to do public penance. These penitents wore sackcloth garments, and were sprinkled with ashes; they were debarred entrance into church until having completed their penance they received absolution. As an act of devotion many of the faithful who were not obliged to submit to this public humiliation desired, nevertheless, to do similar penance and eventually the practice became general. The ashes now used are prepared by burning palms blessed on Palm Sunday of the preceding year.

As in the case of other sacramentals, the spiritual significance of ashes may best be appreciated by studying the prayers used in their blessing. These prayers may be read in extenso in the Missal: they all inculcate the necessity of sorrow for sin, and implore God's mercy and forgiveness. The Church beseeches God to grant through

the invocation of His holy Name that all who may be sprinkled with the ashes for the remission of their sins may receive health of body and safety of soul. Upon the foreheads of all who present themselves at the altar rails the priest makes with the ashes the sign of the cross, at the same time saying:

> *Memento, homo, quia pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris.*
>
> "Remember, man, that thou are dust, and unto dust thou shalt return."

According to the old English custom, after the distribution of the ashes, if there were another church in the same district all the people went in procession, and having said some prayers appropriate to the penitential character of the day, returned to their own church for Mass. With this day began the strict Fast which was kept on all days till after Mass and Vespers had been said in the parish church. The Anglo-Saxon *Ecclesiastical Institutes* speaks of these days as "the tithing-days of the year" which all good Christians should render to God most strictly. The time of Lent was known as the *holy time*, and unnecessary and distracting business was avoided as far as possible. Thus, for example, the assizes were prohibited during the whole period.

From the evening before the First Sunday of Lent till the Thursday before Easter, what was known as the Lenten curtain or the Lenten veil was hung up in all parish churches between the chancel and the nave. It was made of white stuff and hid the sanctuary from the people, except from the reading of the Gospel to the *Orate Fratres*, when it was pulled aside. The veil was also withdrawn on Feast days.

# Palms

The Sunday before Easter, or the Sunday beginning Holy Week, as we now call it, has been styled Palm Sunday from time immemorial, because of the blessing and the procession of palms which takes place on this day. The services of Holy Week are almost dramatic in keeping one after another the memorials of Our Lord's last week on earth and the memory of His Passion and Death. So the week is introduced by the commemoration of Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem when the people welcomed Him, carrying palms in their hands and spreading them on the ground.

The blessing of the branches of palm and olive is a long and very solemn rite. As will be seen in the Missal, the Church prays that all who receive this sacramental may obtain protection of soul and body; and that those who dwell in the houses where palms are kept may obtain God's blessing and freedom from adversity. The liturgical prayers refer to the palm as a sign of Our Lord's triumph over the prince of death, while "the sprigs of olive in a manner proclaim the coming of a spiritual unction."

The faithful hold the palms in their hands during the reading of the Gospel and also during the procession. In pre-Reformation days in England this joyous commemoration was made more realistic by the fact that the Blessed Sacrament, which had been temporarily reserved in a beautiful tent in the churchyard, was solemnly carried in procession into the church. All the antiphones sung during the

Palm Sunday procession refer to Our Divine Lord's solemn entry into Jerusalem.

The blessed palms are taken by the faithful to their homes, so that they may win the special graces signified by this sacramental. The palms are sometimes placed in the hands of the dying or dead as a sign of Christian victory and of hope of reward in heaven.

In Catholic England, where it was difficult to obtain branches of real palm or olive, use was made of yew, and for this reason yew-trees are often found planted in churchyards, as the *Liber Festivalis* printed by Caxton in 1483 tells us.

# The Agnus Dei

The name *Agnus Dei* is applied to certain seals or medallions of wax impressed with the image of the Lamb of God represented as immolated and bearing the cross in triumph. According to the best authorities the origin of this form of Sacramental is to be sought in the pious devotion of people, who collected the wax that had fallen from the Paschal Candle to serve as a memorial of the Paschal joy and as a holy preservative against the wiles of the devil. If this be the origin, the devotion of the *Agnus Dei* goes back to the time of the institution of the Paschal Candle in the fourth century. Examples of the medallions have been found dating from the sixth to the seventh century. The origin is probably Roman. The matter from which the medallions are now made is pure wax, a symbol of the virginal purity of Christ, At the present day the practice is for the Pope at the beginning of his Pontificate solemnly to bless these waxen medallions and to renew the ceremony each subsequent seventh year,

In virtue of the prayers said at their blessing Agnus Deis are regarded as specially adapted to secure God's protection on those who wear them. Divine Providence is invoked for the preservation of the wearer from the dangers, storms, plagues, fires, and floods. God's merciful care is also besought on behalf of expectant mothers. In the days of Queen Elizabeth the persecuted Catholics in England seem to have derived much consolation from the possession of Agnus Deis, and special watch was kept at the ports to prevent these pious objects being introduced into England.

# About This EBook

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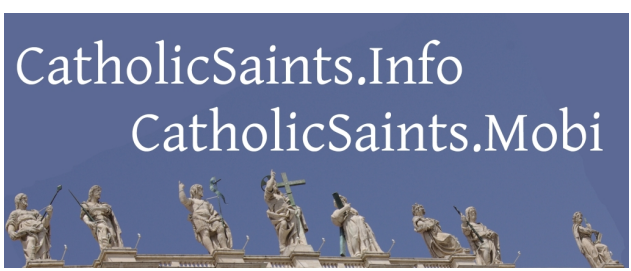
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